

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-61 (canceled)

Claim 62 (currently amended): A transgenic seedling or more mature plant comprising a recombinant polynucleotide that encodes a polypeptide, wherein:

(a) the polynucleotide specifically hybridizes to SEQ ID NO: 3 or the complement of SEQ ID NO: 3 under stringent conditions that comprise wash conditions of 0.2x SSC, 0.1% SDS at 65°C; or

(b) the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 85% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4;

wherein as a result of the polypeptide [[is]] being overexpressed in the transgenic seedling or more mature plant, the transgenic seedling or more mature plant is more tolerant to salt or osmotic stress than a control plant that has not been transformed with the recombinant polynucleotide.

Claim 63 (currently amended): The transgenic seedling or more mature plant of Claim 62, wherein said polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 90% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 64 (currently amended): The transgenic seedling or more mature plant of Claim 62, wherein said polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 65 (currently amended): The transgenic seedling or more mature plant of Claim 62, wherein said polypeptide comprises SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 66 (currently amended): The transgenic seedling or more mature plant of Claim 62, wherein said recombinant polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO: 3.

Claim 67 (currently amended): The transgenic seedling or more mature plant of Claim 62, wherein expression of the polypeptide is regulated by a constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific promoter.

Claim 68 (currently amended): The transgenic seedling or more mature plant of Claim 62, wherein the transgenic seedling or more mature plant is a transformed seed that comprises the recombinant polynucleotide.

Claim 69 (currently amended): A method for producing a transgenic seedling or more mature plant that is more tolerant to salt or osmotic stress, the method steps comprising:

introducing into the transgenic seedling or more mature plant a recombinant polynucleotide that encodes a polypeptide, wherein:

(a) the polynucleotide specifically hybridizes to SEQ ID NO: 3 or the complement of SEQ ID NO: 3 under stringent conditions that comprise wash conditions of 0.2x SSC, 0.1% SDS at 65°C; or

(b) the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 85% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4;

wherein when the polypeptide is overexpressed in the transgenic seedling or more mature plant, the transgenic seedling or more mature plant is more tolerant to salt or osmotic stress than a control plant that has not been transformed with the recombinant polynucleotide.

Claim 70 (previously presented): The method of Claim 69, wherein said polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 90% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 71 (previously presented): The method of Claim 69, wherein said polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 72 (previously presented): The method of Claim 69, wherein said polypeptide comprises SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 73 (previously presented): The method of Claim 69, wherein said recombinant polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO: 3.

Claim 74 (previously presented): The method of Claim 69, wherein expression of the polypeptide is regulated by a constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific promoter.

Claim 75 (currently amended): The method of Claim 69, wherein the transgenic seedling or more mature plant is a transformed seed that comprises the recombinant polynucleotide.

Claim 76 (currently amended): A transgenic seedling or more mature plant comprising a recombinant polynucleotide that encodes SEQ ID NO: 4, wherein the polypeptide is overexpressed in the transgenic seedling or more mature plant, the transgenic seedling or more mature plant has greater tolerance to salt than a control plant.

Claim 77 (currently amended): The transgenic seedling or more mature plant of Claim 76, wherein the transgenic seedling or more mature plant has greater cotyledon expansion than the control plant after growing for three days in the presence of 150 mM NaCl.